

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of creating and providing information about a requisition order, comprising the steps:

providing an automated agent for receiving and identifying a set of inquiries about the requisition order, and for each identified inquiry, preparing an associated response;

a user transmitting to the agent one of said set of inquiries;

the agent identifying the transmitted inquiry and preparing the associated response;

using an instant messaging system to send said associated response from the agent to the user;

the user initiating [[a]] an instant messaging session with the agent via the instant messaging system; and

the user and the agent creating the requisition order during said instant messaging session by interactively communicating with each other during said instant messaging session via the instant messaging system, thereby eliminating the need to use a Web site to create the requisition order,

wherein the agent helps the user create orders through a chat window.

2. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 1, for use with a given requisition system, and further comprising the steps of:

the user submitting the requisition order to the requisition system; and

providing the agent with access to the requisition system to transmit information to and to receive information from the requisition system.

3. (Original) A method according to Claim 2, further comprising the step of the agent, in response to identifying the transmitted inquiry, accessing the requisition system to obtain an answer to the transmitted inquiry.

4. (Original) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the step of the user transmitting to the agent one of said set of inquiries includes the step of the user using the instant messaging system to transmit to the agent said one of the set of inquiries.

5. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 1, wherein:

the step of the user initiating a session with the agent includes the step of the user transmitting to the agent a request to initiate preparation of the requisition order;

the step of the agent preparing the associated response includes the step of the agent preparing a set of prompts to obtain information from the user about the requisition order; and

the step of using the instant messaging system includes the step of using the instant messaging system to send the set of prompts to the user.

6. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 5, further comprising the steps of:

the user, in response to receiving the set of prompts, providing said information to the agent; and

the agent using said provided information to complete the requisition order, and sending the completed requisition order to a given requisition system.

Claims 7-18 (Cancelled)

19 (Currently Amended) A method of creating and providing information about a requisition order, comprising the steps:

providing an automated agent for receiving and identifying a set of inquiries about the requisition order, and for each identified inquiry, preparing an associated response;

using an application program interface for connecting the agent with an instant messaging system;

a user transmitting one of said set of inquiries utilizing the instant messaging system;

the agent receiving said one of the inquiries utilizing said application program interface;

the agent identifying said one of the inquiries and preparing the associated response;

using the application program interface to send said associated response from the agent to the user via the instant messaging system;

the user initiating [[a]] an instant messaging session with the agent via the instant messaging system; and

the user and the agent creating the requisition order during said instant messaging session by interactively communicating with each other during said instant messaging session via the instant messaging system, thereby eliminating the need to use a Web site to create the requisition order,

wherein the agent helps the user create orders through a chat window.

20. (Original) A method according to Claim 19, for use with a given requisitioning system, comprising the further step of using a database connection program to connect the agent with the requisitioning system and to enable the agent to send messages to and to receive data from said requisitioning system.

21. (Original) A method according to Claim 20, wherein:

 said one of the inquiries asks for specific information from the requisitioning system;
 the step of the agent preparing the associated response includes the step of, the agent using the database connection program to access the requisitioning system to obtain said specific information; and

 the step of using the application program interface to send the response to the user includes the steps of the agent sending said specific information to the application program interface, and said application program interface sending said specific information, via the instant messaging system, to the user.

22. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 21, wherein said one of the inquiries asks for the status of the requisition order.

23. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 1, comprising the further step of:

 the agent providing to the user an address of a Website where the user can get more information about the requisition order; and
 wherein the step of using the instant messaging system to send the associated response includes the steps of:

- i) the agent returning to the user a list of order identifications for the user, and
 - ii) the agent sending to the user a list of approvers currently assigned to the requisition order.
24. (New) The method according to Claim 1, wherein both the user and the agent must be currently logged on to the instant messaging system in order for a message to be sent from the user to the agent.
25. (New) A system for providing information about a requisition order, comprising:
an automated agent for receiving and identifying a set of inquiries, and for each identified inquiry, preparing an associated response;
a user station for transmitting to the agent one of said set of inquiries; wherein the agent identifies the transmitted inquiry and prepares the associated response; and
means connecting the agent to an instant messaging system to send said associated response from the agent to the user station;
wherein a user at the user station initiates an instant messaging session with the agent via the instant messaging system, and the user and the agent create the requisition order during said instant messaging session by interactively communicating with each other during said instant messaging session via the instant messaging system, thereby eliminating the need to use a Web site to create the requisition order.

26. (New) A system according to Claim 25, for use with a given requisition system and wherein a user prepares the requisition order and submits the order to the requisition system, the system further comprising means for providing the agent with access to the requisition system to transmit information to and to receive information from the requisition system.

27. (New) A system according to Claim 26, wherein the agent, in response to identifying the transmitted inquiry, accesses the requisition system to obtain an answer to the transmitted inquiry.

28. (New) A system according to Claim 25, wherein the user station transmits to the agent a request to initiate preparation of the requisition order, and wherein:

the agent includes means to prepare a set of prompts to obtain information from the user about the requisition order; and

the agent uses the instant messaging system to send the set of prompts to the user.

29. (New) A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for providing information about a requisition order, wherein an automated agent is provided for receiving and identifying a set of inquiries, and for each identified inquiry, preparing an associated response, and a user transmits to the agent one of said set of inquiries, said method steps comprising:

the agent identifying the transmitted inquiry and preparing the associated response;

using an instant messaging system to send said associated response from the agent to the user;

the user initiating an instant messaging session with the agent via the instant messaging system; and

the user and the agent creating the requisition order during said instant messaging session by interactively communicating with each other during said instant messaging session via the instant messaging system, thereby eliminating the need to use a Web site to create the requisition order

30. (New) A program storage device according to Claim 29, for use with a given requisition system, and wherein the user prepares the requisition order and submits the order to the requisition system; and the method comprises the further step of providing the agent with access to the requisition system to transmit information to and to receive information from the requisition system.

31. (New) A program storage device according to Claim 30, wherein the method comprises the further step of the agent, in response to identifying the transmitted inquiry, accessing the requisition system to obtain an answer to the transmitted inquiry.

32. (New) A program storage device according to Claim 29, wherein the user transmits to the agent a request to initiate preparation of the requisition order, and wherein:

the step of the agent preparing the associated response includes the step of the agent preparing a set of prompts to obtain information from the user about the requisition order; and

the step of using the instant messaging system includes the step of using the instant messaging system to send the set of prompts to the user.